



# The Lemonier Express

## December 2003

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## Message From the Commander

Christmas...what a wonderful time of the year. Snow, decorations, music, family traditions, caroling, children, stockings, gifts, candy canes and fruit cake, shopping, and the familiar smell of favorite foods...all memories that we love and share, and that this year we will miss. Everyone wants to be "home for the holidays"! This year will be different. This year we answer to a higher calling.

As we enter this Christmas Season, I want to thank each of you for the exceptional role you have played in the success of this mission. The cooperative spirit, joint atmosphere, and commitment to excellence that I have observed these past months is second to none. The scope of your mission is intimidating. You are a Task Force of 1200, while Iraq is 180,000 and Afghanistan is 12,000. Your area of operation is five times larger than Iraq and Afghanistan combined and it includes 6 countries and one failed state (Somalia). Our partnership consists of 13 nations, 6 Ambassadors and Country Teams, all elements of the US Interagency, and Naval Forces. Your successes include:

- Hundreds of Trans National Terrorists Exposed
- Dozens of Trans National Terrorists Captured or Killed
- 15 Humanitarian Assistance Programs conducted in 6 countries
- 16 Civil Military Projects completed in 6 countries
- 35 Civil Military Projects on-going or projected
- Coastal and border security operations with four countries
- Plans to develop coastal security, border security, national-level CT capability, and improved intelligence architecture in six countries.
- Pressure that has disrupted planned terrorists attacks.
- Pressure that has disrupted the recruitment, training, and shipping of foreign fighters.
- Host Nation and local populous attitudes favorably changed.

Simply amazing! You have made a significant difference in an area of the world that most do not even know exists, but that is one of the prime potential terrorist breeding grounds in the world. General Abizaid has held you up as the model for what Iraq and Afghanistan need to look like in the future. You should be very proud of what you have accomplished.

Separation is never easy. That is why we refer to it in terms like sacrifice, service, commitment, and endurance. As we enter this Christmas Season, I know that each of you would rather be at home with family and loved ones. It is easy to forget amongst the festivities at home that it is not the Christmas tree, presents, or stockings that are the main attraction. This year I ask you to reflect on the real reason we celebrate this special season. Over two thousand years ago, I believe God gave us the ultimate gift in the form of His Son Jesus Christ on that cold winter's night in Bethlehem. It is because of His birth that we celebrate this season by giving gifts to one another. I hope this year's celebration is a special one for each of you – in spite of your separation from home.

These are challenging times, and we are a Nation at war. We were attacked. Now we fight a foe that seeks to destroy the freedoms and benefits that those before us died to create and maintain. Thank you for your heroic effort, supreme sacrifice, superb results, and commitment to excellence most only read about in history books. It is a privilege to serve with great Americans who are destined to be known as the next Greatest Generation. Your work ensures our children and grandchildren will continue to enjoy the freedoms that we cherish, and that most take for granted. It is true that "freedom has a special flavor that the protected never know." You know...and I thank you!

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year,

Mastin M. Robeson  
Brigadier General, US Marine Corps  
Commander, CJTF-HOA



### IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

#### CJTF-HOA Info

- 1(866)360-3775
- 1(910)451-2222

#### American Red Cross

- 1(877)272-7337

#### TriCare Appointment/Advice

- 1(800)931-9501

#### CJTF-HOA Family Readiness Officer, Djibouti, Africa

- Lt. Kevin S. Barnett - USN

- 24 hrs Tel: 011-973-82-9257
- e-mail: [froafrica@hoa.centcom.mil](mailto:froafrica@hoa.centcom.mil)

#### Family Readiness Officer, Camp Lejeune, NC

- Lt. J. A. Polson - USMC

- Tel: (910) 451-8735
- e-mail: [frousa1@hoa.centcom.mil](mailto:frousa1@hoa.centcom.mil)

#### Family Readiness Staff Non-Commissioned Officer, Camp Lejeune, NC

-GySgt. F. V. Munoz

- Tel: (910) 451-8719
- e-mail: [frousa2@hoa.centcom.mil](mailto:frousa2@hoa.centcom.mil)